

# Bill Fromhold

State Representative

49th District

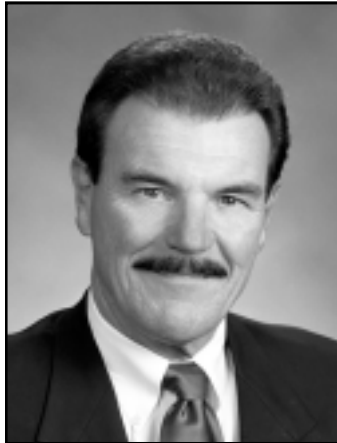
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## CAPITAL LETTER:

An update from  
your Legislature

*Leadership:*

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*Committees:*

Second Vice Chair

Appropriations

Member

Trade & Economic Development  
Higher Education

**Dear Fellow Citizen:**

**I hope you and your family enjoyed peaceful winter holidays - and you've gotten off to a good new year.**

For the next several weeks, the Legislature is in full swing. **Your interest in the House of Representatives and the Senate - in the debates and decisions that go on in your state government - is very much appreciated!**

**Our state of Washington, as I reported a few months ago, is facing as serious an economic challenge as we've ever confronted.** Cutbacks in high-technology and other industries, for one important thing, are threatening many families. With an unemployment rate north of six percent, our state holds the highly dubious distinction of possessing one of the worst jobless levels in the whole country. And there's a difference of approximately \$1.2 billion between the citizen programs and services called for in the budget - and the money to pay for these programs and services.

**The top two responsibilities for us this year in Olympia can each be summed up in one word: *Resolve*. Specifically, we must:**

- ***Resolve our state's budget crisis.***
- ***Resolve - once and for all! - our state's transportation mess.***

Not far behind these issues in terms of importance, as I also noted in my Autumn 2001 *Capital Letter*, is making sure that every Washingtonian lives in a secure community.

The September 11 terrorist attack against our country was - and remains today - an awful reminder that ensuring public safety is full-time work. But how *do* you guarantee safety in our transportation networks, energy sites, public buildings, and dams and other natural-resource facilities? The new Select Committee on Community Security is searching for ways to do just that. Among additional directions, the committee is also addressing bioterrorism.

**Please let me know what you think about these and other issues. My assistant, Ann Tjersland, and I want to hear from you!**

**Respectfully,**

**Bill Fromhold**  
State Representative  
49th Legislative District

## Our budget crisis:

The national recession comes home to roast our state economy

It is important to keep our state and legislative business in perspective.

Yes, make no mistake about it: The budget nightmare that we're facing is not the worst thing on Earth that could happen. Our financial problem is nothing compared to the tragic heartache for families of loved ones taken in the atrocities last year in New York City, in Washington, D.C., and in a Pennsylvania countryside.

**But we do have a serious and substantial responsibility before us here in the Evergreen State.**

When a ceramics plant in Vancouver closed not too long ago, we saw hundreds of local jobs lost. That's one example of the economic challenges confronting many citizens. Unemployment last October in Clark County was just under seven percent. We had 11,700 people out of work - and that's more than 60 percent above the number of idled workers here the year before.

I mentioned our state's giant budget ravine. Governor Locke's supplemental-budget proposal released last month is built on foundations that:

- ***Would cut services and programs (to the tune of more than \$560 million) which aren't absolutely essential.***
- ***Would eliminate hundreds of staff in the Department of Social and Health Services.***
- ***Would not - and I'll repeat this as often as it takes for it to sink in - increase any general taxes.***

Schools, colleges and universities in Clark County and the rest of our state have a key role for Washington families. Our budget must continue to reflect the importance of high-quality training - and retraining later in

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life, if need be - for young people and adults. Retraining is particularly important for people who lose their jobs and are looking to improve their skills - and their employability.

**Well-paying jobs in long-term companies - that's what economic development is all about. And while economic development is always an important course for our state to steer, it's particularly important now that we're fighting the worst recession in 20 years.**

Let me say one more thing about the state budget. As a vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee, the new budget that I'll help write must be *balanced*. **The budget must balance, that is, the cost of citizen-initiatives approved in recent years with our responsibility to provide essential services for public health and safety.**

**Our transportation mess:**  
Good roads are essential for our businesses and working families

**Is there any doubt that our state economy will stay up on blocks as long as the Legislature stalls out on the transportation issue?**

In a nutshell, here's the transportation challenge confronting Vancouver and many other parts of Washington:

- Suppose you have the best company in the world, but people - your employees as well as your potential customers - can't even get to your door because they're stuck in traffic somewhere out on the road? **Unacceptable.**
- Suppose you make the best goods and products in the world, but you can't get them to port or market because they're stuck in traffic somewhere out on the road? **Unacceptable.**
- Suppose you want to be working hard to run a good business or pursue a good career, but you can't get anywhere with it because you're stuck in traffic somewhere out on the road? **Unacceptable.**

Quality economic development just won't happen without a decent transportation system! The state of Washington has grown so much and so quickly - where is there a better example of growth than in our own Clark County communities? - that our roads, streets, highways, bridges, and other parts of the infrastructure just haven't kept up.

The governor has offered a solution that he says will raise several billion dollars for transportation improvements over the next decade. His plan would increase the state's gas tax - which hasn't gone up in more than 10 years - by nine cents. Another plan suggests a four-cent hike in the gas tax - with an option for local communities to further raise it if their citizens want further improvements.

**As much as gridlock on our roads must end, so must gridlock in the Legislature end. I will review our transportation alternatives, and I will take your opinions into consideration on this issue - just as on other issues. Then, I will support a plan reflecting local say-so in this transportation component of economic development.**

**Town Hall meeting:**  
Citizen participation is always important in your legislative process

Please circle Saturday, February 23, as a day specifically set aside for personally sharing opinions with your 49th District legislators.

Representative Val Ogden, Senator Don Carlson, and I are having a Town Hall that morning from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. This public meeting will be held at the Vancouver Housing Authority, which is located at 2500 Main Street in Vancouver. We look forward to seeing you!

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